



Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19: Detailed engagement and consultation response data for RUTHIN

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Purpose of this report

This report aims to provide a detailed breakdown of data from representations received by key stakeholders and the community of Ruthin in respect to Denbighshire County Council's *Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 for Ruthin*

For the purpose of this report, representations made between 21st June 2020 and 24th July 2020 are included.

How the data has been collected

Data in this report is taken from:

- Representations made directly to the council by email, letter, telephone call or faceto-face meeting
- Representations made via e-petition (where closed and presented to the council)
- Representations made directly to the council via social media
- Representations made directly to the council via the County Conversation Portal (the Council's online engagement and consultation hub)

Other data which the council is aware of, but is unable to include for analysis includes:

- Comments made to the local or national press
- Representations made by community members to the town council, to county councillors, to Welsh Assembly Members (AMs) or to UK Members of Parliament (MPs). Note: it is expected that these elected representatives would provide their own response, which should be representative of any contact they have received from their local community.
- Comments made on social media channels not set up and/or not moderated by the Council, including local Facebook groups

Representations by elected representatives and other stakeholder groups

Between 21st June and 24th July, the Council received representations from the following:

Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19: Stakeholder and community engagement report for RUTHIN

- Ruthin Town Council
- Ruthin and District Civic Association

Representations made by the community

- 3 emails
- 10 responses on the separate 'Town Centre Recovery' survey
- 591 'Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19' consultation survey responses

Welsh Language

Representations were received by language as follows:

- 7 representations were made in Welsh
- 2 representations were made bilingually in Welsh and English
- 597 representations were made in English

Preliminary 'Town Centre Recovery' survey data

On 21st June 2020, the Council launched a survey for businesses and a survey for town centre visitors, intending to capture 'snapshot' of people's experiences in [town] and to highlight any concerns about returning to town centres after an extended period of 'lockdown'.

The surveys are ongoing and the council intends to continue to collect this data as new ways of accessing towns (such as social distancing) are likely to have an impact on the tourist season, as well as in winter when external factors such as inclement weather may have more of an affect. These surveys will be reported on separately on a quarterly basis (every 12 weeks from survey commencement) until further notice.

Some response data provided for the 'Town Centre Recovery' survey was clearly intended (evidenced by respondent comments) to be included in the Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 consultations.

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Ruthin received 10 of these comments, and this comment will be included in the consultation summary in the next section of this report.

Feedback from consultation stage

The consultation for the Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19 for Ruthin ran from 9th July 2020 to 26th July 2020.

The consultations were hosted online on the Council's County Conversation Portal due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to coverage in the local press, the consultation was promoted on the Council's own website, on the Council's social media channels and in some local community-based Facebook groups not run by the Council.

Social media and County Conversation Portal analytics

Between 9th July and 26th July, the Council's social media reach (the amount of times posts were seen) in regards to the consultations was as follows:

English Facebook posts: 6,535 total reach

English Twitter posts: 4,465 total reach

Welsh Facebook posts: 127 total reach

Welsh Twitter posts: 110 total reach

Total across all social media: 11,237 total reach

Google Analytics is used to track visits to the County Conversation Portal, and shows approximately **4,800 unique users** visited the County Conversation Portal during the consultation period over **6,900 sessions** (suggesting a number of users visited the site more than once in this period). Average time spent on the Portal per session was 4 minutes and 36 seconds.

This is approximately 4x the average number of visits per month (based on an average of 1,100 visits per month from January to June 2020).

Visitors to the County Conversation Portal downloaded the Ruthin proposal documents, maps and additional visuals provided by Ruthin Town Council a total of 1,269 times, and 591 responses in total were received.

Elected representative and partner/stakeholder feedback

Ruthin Town Council submitted a letter to Denbighshire County Council dated 23rd July 2020. The Town Council was generally supportive of the scheme and provided additional 'artist impressions' of some of the scheme areas which they requested that Denbighshire County Council include for residents' consideration alongside the proposal document and scheme map.

The full copy of their letter is attached in the appendices at the end of this report.

Ruthin and District Civic Association sent an email dated 23rd July 2020. The Association stated that they supported in principle the objectives of the proposals for Ruthin however raised a number of concerns, these were primarily concerns that the proposals could lead to an increase in on-street car parking in sensitive or heritage areas, concerns that rerouting could increase speed of traffic, and concerns sustainability of proposals in the longer term.

A PDF copy of their email is attached in the appendices at the end of this report.

Online response survey quantative data

In total, the Council received 591 responses to online surveys on the County Conversation Portal in response to this consultation. Not all respondents answered all questions. The questions and a summary of the responses received continue on the next page of this report.

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About the proposals

This section of the online survey asked respondents to state to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements in regards to the proposals for Ruthin.

1. The proposal to widen pavements will make social distancing easier

585 respondents answered this question

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Strongly agree	371	63.42%
Somewhat agree	121	20.68%
Somewhat disagree	42	7.18%
Strongly disagree	47	8.03%
No opinion	1	0.68%

2. The proposal to create shared pedestrian/cycle paths will increase the numbers of people who choose to walk or cycle around town

577 respondents answered this question

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Strongly agree	292	50.61%
Somewhat agree	144	24.96%
Somewhat disagree	74	12.82%
Strongly disagree	61	10.57%
No opinion	6	1.04%

3. The proposal to support cafes, pubs and restaurants to introduce outside seating will make the town centre more welcoming

574 respondents answered this question

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Strongly agree	473	73.69%
Somewhat agree	94	16.38%
Somewhat disagree	26	4.53%
Strongly disagree	26	4.63%
No opinion	5	0.87%

4. Introducing a temporary one-way system to parts of Market Street and Well Street to enable these changes is acceptable

571 respondents answered this question

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Strongly agree	385	67.43%
Somewhat agree	77	13.9%
Somewhat disagree	42	7.36%
Strongly disagree	62	10.86%
No opinion	5	0.88%

Overall, respondents can generally be considered to be **in favour** of the proposed scheme, with 81.33% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that introducing a temporary one-way system to parts of Market Street and Well Street would be an acceptable solution to facilitate pavement widening, to facilitate 'café culture' and to promote and sustain active travel in response to Covid-19.

Reasons to visit Ruthin Town Centre

This section asked respondents to think about which reasons commonly given to visit a town centre such as Ruthin were the most important to them.

1. Going to work (such as in a shop, restaurant or café)

This question was answered by 482 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	134	27.8%
Somewhat important	97	20.12%
Not that important	67	13.9%
Not at all important	31	6.43%
Not applicable	153	31.74%

Report continues on next page



2. Purchasing essential goods/services such as food or medical supplies

This question was answered by 532 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	332	62.41%
Somewhat important	145	27.26%
Not that important	32	6.02%
Not at all important	6	1.13%
Not applicable	17	3.2%

3. Purchasing non-essential goods/services such as clothes, hobby/interest items

This question was answered by 530 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	210	39.62%
Somewhat important	223	42.08%
Not that important	73	13.77%
Not at all important	15	2.83%
Not applicable	9	1.7%

4. Eating out or socialising

This question was answered by 539 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	309	57.33%
Somewhat important	184	34.14%
Not that important	37	6.86%
Not at all important	6	1.11%
Not applicable	3	0.56%

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5. Spend time with friends or family

This question was answered by 55 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	273	51.8%
Somewhat important	175	33.21%
Not that important	50	9.49%
Not at all important	17	3.23%
Not applicable	12	2.28%

6. Spending time outdoors

This question was answered by 522 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Very important	286	54.79%
Somewhat important	147	28.16%
Not that important	61	11.69%
Not at all important	19	3.64%
Not applicable	9	1.72%

Overall, carrying out essential shopping is the most important reason that respondents visited the town centre, with 62.41% of respondents saying this was 'very important' to them – however over half of respondents also said that socialising/eating out, spending time outdoors and spending time with friends/family were also very important reasons for visiting Ruthin town centre.

How respondents travel to and access the town centre

This section asked respondents to decide which way they most commonly travelled into or accessed Ruthin town centre, and whether the proposed *Local Sustainable Transport Response to Covid-19* measures would change this at all.

Report continues on next page

1. Thinking about how you access the town centre, which of the following statements is applicable to you?

If you vary how you travel, please select the option that you feel is most relevant to you.

This question was answered by 546 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
I usually walk into the town centre	195	35.71%
I usually cycle into the town centre	19	3.48%
I usually drive and try to find on-street parking	156	28.57%
I usually drive and use a nearby car park	173	31.68%
I usually rely on public transport	3	0.55%

2. Do you think the proposed changes will have any effect on this?

This question was answered by 547 respondents

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	177	32.36%
No	370	67.64%

Overall, the majority (60.25%) of respondents said they currently **drive** in, and the majority of respondents (67.84%) also said that the way that they accessed Ruthin Town Centre would be unlikely to change as a result of the proposals.

Comments on the proposals

In addition to being able to answer multiple choice comments on the consultation survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments explaining the reasons for their views.

In explaining their general views on the proposals, the respondents were able to leave comments. In total, 417 respondents chose to leave a comment on this first section of the

consultation survey. Several comments expressed opinions on more than one matter. The comments have been split and summarised as positive or negative statements on the next page.

The Council respects everyone's rights to their own opinions, whether these are positive or negative, however the Council wishes to note that it has a 'zero tolerance' policy on abuse directed at individuals or organisations as part of its Customer Service Standards.

Regrettably 12 of the 417 comments left were withdrawn from consideration by the Council because they violated the 'zero tolerance policy'. The 'multiple choice' element of these respondents' representations will still be included where applicable.

Positive comments in favour of the proposals were expressed as follows:

Positive comment theme	Number of mentions
Generally positive comments about proposals overall	85
Supportive of social distancing measures	58
Supportive of 'café culture' (especially around St Peter's Square)	53
Supportive of measures to improve pedestrian and/or cyclist access	52
Agree with one-way system proposals	30
Preference for pedestrians/cyclists to be given priority over cars	27
Supportive of measures to reduce traffic flow through top of hill	18
Support of scheme for environmental/pollution reduction reasons	8
Support loss of on-street parking	5
Support for active travel more generally	4

A number of respondents also took the opportunity to make (generally) positive

suggestions, or agreed to the proposals for Ruthin in principle provided that extra

consideration was extended to their suggestions. These suggestions are summarised as follows:

Suggestion	Number of mentions
Pedestrianisation of St Peter's Square	15
Some form of free parking offer for the town centre	13
One-way system to run the opposite way to the proposed route	4
Remove the roundabout in St Peter's Square	4
Facilitate events to happen in St Peter's Square	4
Improve cycle links to town from surrounding towns/villages	3
Include contraflow for cyclists in proposed one-way areas	2
Include additional traffic calming measures in proposed one-way areas	1
Allow public parking or outdoor events in County Hall car park at weekends	1

A number of comments against the proposals were received as follows:

Negative comment theme	Number of mentions
Generally negative comments about proposals overall	60
Concerns about a shared space for pedestrians and cyclists	38
Concerns about access for disabled/elderly or car-dependent visitors	18
Concerns about loss of on-street parking	15
Against the idea of 'café culture'	9
Concerns about impact of changes on businesses	7
Generally disagree with one-way system	
Concerns changes could increase vehicle speeds	5
Concerns changes could cause other vehicle flow issues	5
Concerns about access for HGVs, coaches and agricultural vehicles	4
Concerns about access to public transport	3
Concerns about access for emergency services in one-way areas	3
Concerns about unintended negative impact on residential streets	2
Concerns the changes could increase anti-social behaviour	1

In explaining their reasons for visiting Ruthin town centre, 169 respondents chose to leave a comment. Some respondents provided more than one reason why they visit the town centre. Their reasons are summarised below:

Reason(s) for visiting	Number of mentions
To visit shops or other services (such as hairdressers)	37
Because Ruthin is a nice place to spend time / generally just like the town	34
Socialising	20
To visit cafes / restaurants / pubs	15
For exercise / walking the dog	11
To use the Post Office or Bank	10
Resident in the town centre	10
Work or volunteer in the town centre	7
Visit Library and One Stop Shop	6
To visit Doctor/Dentist or other healthcare provision	2
To visit tourist attractions or attend events	2

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In explaining whether they felt the proposals for Ruthin would impact how they travelled to/around the town centre, 181 respondents chose to leave a comment.

Impact on access	Number of mentions
General comments in favour of proposals (not related to access)	18
Wouldn't impact access, but would feel safer	16
Would feel safer to walk into town centre than currently	16
Would walk into town more often	16
Feels their access to town centre would be negatively impacted	15
General comments against proposals (not related to access)	14
Concerned about impact on disabled/elderly/car-dependent users	13
Feels their access to town centre would be positively impacted	12
Would cycle into town more often	11
Would feel safer to cycle into town than currently	8
Made additional suggestions for improving access to town centre	6
Would drive into town more often	6
Would drive into town less often	3
Wouldn't impact access, but would feel less safe	1
Would walk into town less often	1

Response summary

Overall, respondents for Ruthin seem to generally be in favour of the proposals or some modified form of them, with 81.33% of respondents on the consultation survey either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the introduction of a temporary one-way system to facilitate pavement widening would be an acceptable temporary change for the town.

Comments left by respondents indicate a strong preference to 're-prioritise' Ruthin town centre to favour pedestrians and cyclists over motor vehicles, and to introduce an element of 'café culture' to the town. There seems to be a wider appetite amongst a number of respondents for permanent changes to the town centre in order to enable this.

Negative comments relate mainly to concerns about provision for those who are disabled, elderly or otherwise dependent on a car to access shops and essential services in Ruthin town centre. Related to this a large number of the respondents who were generally against the proposals (as well as some who were in favour of them) expressed concerns about the loss of parking or general lack of parking provision for 'pop and shop' activities.



Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ruthin Town Council response

CYNGOR TREF RHUTHUN RUTHIN TOWN COUNCIL

Yr Hen Lys Sgwâr Sant Pedr RHUTHUN LL15 1AA Ffôn: (01824) 703797 e-bost: clerc@cyngortrefrhuthun.gov.uk



The Old Courthouse St. Peter's Square RUTHIN LL15 1AA Tel: (01824) 703797 e-mail: clerk@ruthintowncouncil.gov.uk

Clerc y Dref / Town Clerk: Sandra Williams

23.07.2020

Ben Wilcox-Jones Uwch Beiriannyd – Diogelwch y Ffordd a Thrafnidiaeth Gynaliadwy Senior Engineer – Road Safety and Sustainable Transportation Gwasanaeth Cynllunio a Gwarchod y Cyhoedd / Planning and Public Protection Service Cyngor Sir Ddinbych / Denbighshire County Council Caledfryn DINBYCH / DENBIGH

Annwyl Mr Wilcox-Jones,

Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi am hysbysu Cyngor Tref Rhuthun am yr ymgynghoriad ynghylch y cynlluniau i gyflwyno system traffig un ffordd yn unig dros dro yn Rhuthun fel rhan o'r ymateb i fesurau cadw pellter cymdeithasol Covid-19 ac annnog teithio egnïol.

Cafodd y cynlluniau arfaethedig eu trafod yng nghyfarfod y Cyngor Tref nos Lun, 13 Gorffennaf, ac roedd y Cynghorwyr o blaid cyflwyno'r mesurau hyn.

Roeddynt yn awyddus i gael eu hysbysu am ganlyniad yr ymgynghoriad a phryd bydd y gwaith yn dechrau, os penderfynir bwrw ymlaen gyda'r cynlluniau. Dear Mr Wilcox-Jones,

Thank you very much for informing Ruthin Town Council about the consultation regarding the scheme to introduce a temporary one-way traffic system in Ruthin as part of the response to Covid-19 social distancing measures and encouraging active travel.

The proposed scheme was discussed at the Town Council meeting on Monday, 13 July, and the Councillors were in favour of implementing these measures.

They were eager to be informed about the consultation findings and when the work will start, if it is decided to progress the scheme.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely,

S Milliams

Sandra Williams Clerc y Dref / Town Clerk



Appendix 2 – visuals provided by Ruthin Town Council



Figure 1- visual of proposed scheme in Well Street, provided by Ruthin Town Council



Figure 2 - visual of proposed scheme in Market Street, provided by Ruthin Town Council



Appendix 3 – Ruthin and District Civic Association response

From: civic@townandaround.org.uk <civic@townandaround.org.uk> Sent: 23 July 2020 19:26 To: Ben Wilcox-Jones <<u>Ben.Wilcox-Jones@denbighshire.gov.uk</u>>; Rhys Pitson <<u>Rhys.Pitson@denbighshire.gov.uk</u>> Subject: Local Sustainable Transport response to Covid-19: Ruthin

This response is on behalf of the Ruthin & District Civic Association regarding your consultation on local sustainable transport.

The Civic Association was formed in 1988. We are a voluntary organisation which aims to promote civic pride, the highest possible standards in planning & architecture and in securing the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historical and public interest for future generations.

The Civic Association supports in principle most aspects of the proposals in your attempt to meet your stated aims for Ruthin of finding a "new normal", regarding improving social distancing in town and in creating outdoor space where possible for cafés and public houses.

CREATION OF OUTDOOR SPACE COULD INCLUDE MORE AREAS

As regards creating outdoor space, this aim is laudable and should add to the vibrancy of the town. It should be noted, however, that the only premises that will potentially benefit form increased availability of outdoor space thanks to a one-way system will both be large chains: Wetherspoon's (Market Street entrance); and Costa Coffee (Market Street). All other SUBSTANTIVE establishments are on streets or parts of streets you do not propose to treat and this gives the larger chains a competitive advantage while being to the potential detriment of other, smaller usually family-run businesses who as a result might potentially lose trade (though one trader may as a result of the proposals focus more on cafeteria rather than delicatessen sales). Alongside these proposed improvements, we ask that as far as possible you are equitable as regards all other similar businesses elsewhere in Ruthin.

Given, therefore, that most of the town's pubs and cafés are on other streets, we would ask that you give consideration to extending pavement & pedestrian space elsewhere, as well. This is in order to support as many businesses as possible. You could achieve this on the Square, for example, by removing some parking & extending pavements or by allowing businesses to migrate into the centre of the Square, perhaps by removing off-street parking spaces there. The Square, after all, is one of the only areas in town where there is level ground.

Treatment of the Square would benefit two cafés, the Myddelton Arms & Grill and Wetherspoon's main entrance. By narrowing the road & reducing the distance pedestrians need to cross at the top of Clwyd Street, there would potentially be more space to expand outside for one of the aforementioned cafés, while being of considerable benefit to pedestrians who would enjoy better & safer opportunities in crossing what is currently a difficult junction for them. We appreciate that it becomes more problematic but there are also two pubs on Castle Street, two on Clwyd Street and one on lower Well Street, none of which it would seen can benefit from the sort of improvements you wish to see.

Indeed, a longer-term solution would be to reduce drastically the number and amount of vehicular movements and parked vehicles on the Square itself, though we appreciate that this is outside the remit of the current consultation.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENTS ACROSS THE SQUARE SHOULD BE GIVEN HIGHER PRIORITY

The main issue, as stated above, is trying to cross Clwyd Street at its top. The whole Square is, in fact, rather pedestrian unfriendly. While some of this is probably outside the scope of the consultation, you should wherever possible try to strike a better balance between those on foot and motorists, in favour of the former. This would seem to align with the third of your aims as regards active travel.

THE CHANGES SHOULD NOT MASQUERADE AS A SCHEME TO INCREASE CAR PARKING

It would be easy to see how a one-way system could increase the number of on-street car parking spaces. We feel that there is sufficient car parking space elsewhere in town in public car parks and we are strongly of the opinion, given your third aim is to promote active travel and the health benefits therewith, that the scheme should not be a façade for more parking.

It is our view that you could manage without or reduced car parking spaces on the Square, by encouraging motorists to use existing off-street car parking space (while being mindful of the needs of blue badge holders). No car park is so far from the centre of Ruthin as to be of concern and those which are a little farther from the Square do not present a significant disadvantage (other than for blue badge holders, as mentioned).

MEASURES NEED TO BE IN PLACE TO ENSURE TRAFFIC SPEEDS DO NOT INCREASE, AS IS OTHERWISE LIKELY WITH A ONE-WAY SYSTEM

Last week, the Senedd considered positively the first steps for a blanket 20 mph limit on residential roads. Clearly, traffic speeds are important to national politicians, especially where larger number of people are walking. We are not sure whether "residential roads" includes town centre streets but the Civic Association would ask that in parallel with the one way system that you also consider a universal 20 mph limit on town centre streets and, additionally, how speed can also be mitigated, especially along one-way streets where traffic speeds are likely to increase. If not, you will likely fail in your third ambition to improve the prospects of active travel in town. Note that much of Market Street, virtually all of Castle Street and a significant part of Clwyd Street is residential in nature.

We have noticed that motorists are particularly unforgiving when pedestrians are forced to step off the pavement in order to increase distancing with fellow walkers. It's almost as if a pedestrian on a narrow pavement has to make a split-second decision between two risks. Achieving a better balance between those who walk and those who drive would be of considerable benefit to the former.

One short length of road which is particularly difficult for pedestrians to distance is that part of Well Street between what is colloquially called Anchor Corner and the junction with Station Road. This is not part of your consultation but we mention it here, because it remains a concern. For Ruthin, pavement space is relatively good but they are well travelled: pedestrians use this stretch of road from the most populous southern and eastern flanks of the town's residential areas.

Here, traffic funnels from Well Street, from Station Road, from the Wrexham direction and sometimes from the Mold direction. Because of the number of arms, traffic speeds & volumes, and the two bends in the road restricting pedestrian vision, distancing has exacerbated what is a difficult part of town to cross or to step out in order to maintain adequate distancing.

CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE HISTORIC NATURE OF THE TOWN

After a reasonable period, if deemed to be successful for pedestrians, the Civic Association asks that you put in place measures to ensure that the substantive works required are of a good design & quality, as befits a conservation area and that it enhances rather than detracts from the streetscape. This includes road markings and traffic signage, both of which need to be as discrete as they possibly can be. You will no doubt recall the furore associated with the application of double and single yellow lines in town, in 2012! A forest of additional road signs will do nothing to enhance the conservation area.

CLWYD STREET HAS EQUALLY NARROW PAVEMENTS

There are potentially problematic pavements on Clwyd Street which are not being treated under your proposal. Here, pavement space in parts is as bad as along upper Well Street. One public house is affected. There are a number of dwellings on this section that directly abut the pavement without any defendable space for residents. We appreciate that this is not as easy to treat as, for example, upper Well Street and it may mean that residents by car will need to go the "long way round" when leaving Clwyd Street but the distances are not great in comparison to the benefits to pedestrians of increasing space for them.

YOUR PLANS SHOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH PROPOSALS FOR THE MARKET TOWN OF THE FUTURE AND FUTURE GREATER PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY

Nothing within your plans should prevent or frustrate future change that through the Market Town of the Future and other initiatives will or should enhance a more vibrant town centre which is attractive and accessible to those on foot who can in future benefit from more outdoor space available to them.

Ruthin & District Civic Association